

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application. In this listing, claim 1, 3, 6-9, 12-15, and 59 has been amended.

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A ball hitting practice apparatus, said apparatus comprising:

a substantially rigid member having a first end and a second end;

a support member;

~~a first hinge that (a) can be suspended from a frame is secured to the support member and (b) is attached at or~~ near said first end such that said first hinge constrains said rigid member rotates to rotate about a substantially horizontal axis; and

a ball mounting assembly suspended from said second end of said member, wherein said ball mounting assembly comprises:

a tether suspended from said second end of said rigid member, and

a ball mounting device suspended from said tether.

2. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein said rigid member is mounted to said hinge such that said second end rotates in a substantially vertical plane.

~~3.~~ (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 2 wherein said ~~frame has support member is coupled to a vertical support structure that is substantially in said plane.~~

4. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein said rigid member has a weight that is less than a weight of a combination of said ball mounting assembly and a ball attached to said assembly.

5. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein a combination of said rigid member, said ball mounting assembly, and a ball attached to said assembly has a center of gravity that is below said rigid member second end.

~~6.~~ (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 1 further comprising a frame, wherein said hinge is secured to said frame comprises the support member.

~~7.~~ (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 6 wherein said ~~frame comprises a support member is a substantially horizontal support onto which said hinge is secured structure.~~

~~8.~~ (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 7 wherein said frame further comprises a substantially vertical support structure having an upper end and a lower end, and wherein said substantially horizontal support structure has a first end and a second end, said first end of said horizontal support structure being secured near said upper end of said substantially vertical support structure, and wherein said hinge is secured near said second end of said substantially horizontal support structure.

9. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim [[7]]  
8 wherein said frame further includes a base, said substantially vertical support structure being secured to said base for supporting said vertical support structure.

10. (Original) The apparatus of claim 9 wherein said base comprises a plurality of legs.

11. (Original) The apparatus of claim 10 wherein said legs comprises collapsible legs.

12. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim [[7]]  
8 wherein said substantially vertical support structure has an adjustable height.

13. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 12 wherein said substantially vertical support structure is telescopic to allow adjustment of said height.

14. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 7 wherein said substantially horizontal support structure has an adjustable length.

15. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 14 wherein said substantially horizontal [[arm]] support structure is telescopic to allow adjustment of said length.

16. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein said ball mounting device comprises:  
at least one shaft; and

at least one tubular member adapted to rotate around each of said at least one shaft, wherein said at least one tubular member allows for releasable mounting of a ball.

(17.) (Original) The apparatus of claim 16 wherein said shaft comprises an element selected from a group consisting of a rope and a rod.

(18.) (Original) The apparatus of claim 16 wherein a releasable fastener is fixed to at least a portion of said tubular member for facilitating releasable mounting of said ball.

(19.) (Original) The apparatus of claim 18 wherein said releasable fastener comprises two complementary halves, a first of said halves being fixed to said tubular member and a second of said halves being fixed to said ball.

(20.) (Original) The apparatus of claim 19 wherein said releasable fastener comprises a hook and loop type fastener.

(21.) (Original) The apparatus of claim 19 wherein said portion of said tubular member is concave for increasing contact surface between said two halves.

(22.) (Original) The apparatus of claim 19 wherein said releasable fastener comprises a piercing half and a pierceable half.

(23.) (Original) The apparatus of claim 22 wherein said piercing half comprises at least one pointed member and said pierceable half comprises rubber.

24. (Original) The apparatus of claim 16 wherein at least one suction cup is secured to said tubular member for detachable mounting of said ball.

25. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein said rigid member has a length that is adjustable.

26. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein said rigid member is a rod comprising a material selected from a group consisting of foam, aluminum, plastic, rubber, a soft material, and any combination thereof.

27. (Original) The apparatus of claim 26 wherein said rod comprises an aluminum inner rod and a soft material that surrounds at least a portion of said aluminum rod.

28. (Original) The apparatus of claim 27 wherein said rigid member comprises:

an upper elongated portion attached to said hinge; and

a lower elongated portion suspended from said upper portion and capable of movement that is independent from movement of said upper portion.

29. (Original) The apparatus of claim 28 wherein said upper and lower portions are attached together using a ball-and-socket type fastener.

30. (Original) The apparatus of claim 28 wherein said upper and lower portions are attached together using a cylinder-and-socket type fastener.

31. (Original) The apparatus of claim 29 wherein said upper and lower portions are attached together using at least one hook.

32. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein said hinge comprises:

a first part; and  
a second part that is rotatable about said first part and that is attached to said first end of said rigid member.

33. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein said hinge comprises:

a first part that allows said rotation of said rigid member about said substantially horizontal axis; and  
a second movable part including a spring element that allows said rigid member to move in and out of a substantially vertical plane.

34. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein said hinge comprises:

a movable part for allowing a swinging motion of said rigid member about said horizontal axis; and  
a spring element attached to said rigid member to allows said rigid member to move in and out of a substantially vertical plane.

35. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein said hinge comprises a movable part for allowing a swinging motion of said rigid member in a substantially vertical plane, and wherein

said rigid member comprises a spring element to allow a lateral motion of a portion of said rigid member.

36. (Cancelled)

~~34~~ 37. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein said ball mounting device comprises:

a tube having a longitudinal axis;  
a plurality of extending shafts; and  
a plurality of tubular members adapted to rotate around each of said shafts, wherein said at least one tubular member allows for releasable mounting of a ball.

~~37~~ 38. (Original) The apparatus of claim 37 wherein a releasable fastener is fixed to at least a portion of said tubular member for facilitating releasable mounting of said ball.

~~38~~ 39. (Original) The apparatus of claim 38 wherein said releasable fastener comprises two complementary halves, a first of said halves being fixed to said tubular member and a second of said halves being fixed to said ball.

40. (Cancelled)

~~39~~ 41. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein said tether is adjustable in length.

~~40~~ 42. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein said tether comprises an elastic string.

41 43. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein said tether comprises a non-elastic string.

42 44. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein said ball mounting assembly is releasably suspended from said second end of said rigid member.

45. (Cancelled)

43 46. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein said tether has an upper end with an object attached and said second end of said rigid member has a passage adapted to hold said object until said tether has a tension that is greater than a threshold tension.

47-58. (Cancelled)

44 59. (Currently Amended) A ball hitting practice apparatus for use by a hitter, said apparatus comprising:

a frame comprising a base, a substantially vertical support structure secured to said base, and a substantially horizontal support structure having a first end and a second end and being secured to said substantially vertical support;

a hinge secured near said second end of said substantially horizontal support structure;

a substantially rigid member having an upper end and a lower portion, said hinge being attached at or near said upper end such that said hinge constrains said lower portion rotates to rotate about a horizontal axis; and

a ball mounting assembly suspended from said rigid member lower portion, said assembly comprising:

a tether having an upper end and a lower end, said tether upper end being secured to said lower portion of said rigid member; and

a ball mounting device secured to said tether lower end.

*45* 60. (Original) The apparatus of claim *59* wherein said member is fixed to said hinge such that said member rotates in a substantially vertical plane. *44*

*46* 61. (Original) The apparatus of claim 60 wherein said rigid member is a rod comprising a material selected from a group consisting of foam, aluminum, plastic, rubber, a soft material, and any combination thereof.

*47* 62. (Original) The apparatus of claim *60* wherein said ball mounting device comprises:

a support member; and  
at least one tubular member adapted to rotate around said support member.

*48* 63. (Original) The apparatus of claim *62* further comprising fastening material provided on at least one portion of said at least one tubular member. *47*